

Do's and Don'ts Net-Working

1. Attend Business Networking Events

The first step in successful networking is knowing where you should go to make connections:

Which event/conference should you visit:

TIP: Double Check with your PI and colleagues, on your agenda for a TAC Meeting!

2. Choose a Goal, have a clear agenda: Determine your goals:

It's hard to get what you want out of your networking endeavours if you don't start with a clear agenda.

Before attending meetings or events, take the time to determine what your goals are for the experience. For example, you might want to make new connections, donate your time to the community, or simply learn about the latest developments in your research field/business or industry.

3. Get Social in Your Off Hours

Just because you're off the clock doesn't mean it's time to stop networking. If you want to expand your reach, make an effort to chat with attendees at your health club or pilates class. You can even make business connections at your child's school activities and sports events. After all, parents are typically looking for something to chat about besides what's happening on the soccer field!

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4. Know Your Worth: What is it you are doing?

It's not enough to provide your "clients" with a great "product, service". If you can't articulate what it is you do, then you can't hope to convey that information at networking events. Whether your goal is to generate referrals or simply build your virtual rolodex for the future, you should take time to generate an elevator pitch that conveys what you do, for whom you do it, and why PI's/ customers should choose you over your competition.

5. Identify Conversational Icebreakers

If you want to overcome initial awkwardness and make a good first impression, consider opening with a compliment. For example, you might tell the person sitting next to you at a seminar that you like their shoes or tie. Similarly, asking a question gives contacts the chance to talk about themselves. Ask how they got into the field or what they think of a recent development affecting your science.

6. Bring a Buddy

Sometimes starting conversations with strangers is easier if you have a familiar face by your side. If you have a friend or co worker who's also looking to expand their network, consider attending professional events as a twosome. Just be sure you make an effort to connect with other attendees rather than sitting in the corner chatting the whole time.

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7. Overcome Introversiion

If you're naturally shy, having success in networking can be a challenge. Fortunately, there are some strategies for overcoming introversion and making connections. First, consider brainstorming icebreakers before a networking event, so you don't have to come up with ideas on the spot. Second, feel free to take a breather if you get overwhelmed. Go to the restroom, take a walk, or grab a coffee. You can return to the room refreshed and ready to meet new people.

8. Find a Reason to Follow Up

Making connections is only half the battle; you also have to take steps to keep the relationship going. Even if you aren't currently job hunting, strive to reach out to your contacts a few times a year to follow up. You could forward a relevant article, invite them to a seminar or conference, or even just send a friendly note during the holidays.

Of course, being successful in networking is about more than what you do. It's also about what *not* to do. Here are some tactics to avoid if you want to boost your business connections.

9. Don't Be Negative

When searching for conversation starters, avoid speaking negatively about former companies or coworkers. After all, you don't want potential contacts thinking you'd say bad things about them given the opportunity.

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10. Don't Be Selfish

Whether you're chatting at a chamber of commerce event or attending an informational meeting, it's important to remember that networking is about give and take. If you're always the person asking for favors, the relationship is unlikely to last. For best results, look for opportunities to help your networking contacts prosper in their own careers.

11. Don't Be Afraid to Ask for What You Want

We all need help now and again. If you want your networking efforts to be a success, you have to be bold enough to ask for assistance. Before attending that next meetup or seminar, make sure you can articulate what it is that you're seeking. Then, when someone asks how they can help you, tell them the truth.